Introduced by Senator Escutia

December 2, 2002

An act to amend Sections 64, 480.1, 480.2, and 482 of, and to add Section 471 to, the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to property taxation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 17, as amended, Escutia. Property taxation: change in ownership.

The California Constitution generally limits ad valorem taxes on real property to 1% of the full cash value of that property. For purposes of this limitation, "full cash value" is defined as the assessor's valuation of real property as shown on the 1975–76 tax bill under "full cash value" or, thereafter, the appraised value of that real property when purchased, newly constructed, or a change in ownership has occurred. Existing property tax law specifies those circumstances in which the transfer of ownership interests in a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity results in a change in ownership of the real property owned by that entity, and generally provides that a change in ownership as so described occurs when a legal entity or other person obtains a controlling or majority ownership interest in the legal entity. Existing law also specifies other circumstances in which certain transfers of ownership interests in legal entities result in a change in ownership of the real property owned by those legal entities.

Existing law requires a person or entity that obtains a controlling or majority ownership interest in a legal entity, or an entity that makes specified transfers of ownership interests in the legal entity, to file a

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change in ownership statement, as specified, with the State Board of Equalization within 45 days of specified transactions, or whenever requested by that board. Existing law imposes a penalty of 10% of the taxes owed to the county on a parcel of real property if an assessee fails to file a change in ownership statement with the board within 45 days of a board request.

This bill would, pursuant to state legislative findings and declarations, state the intent of the Legislature to enact a program to specify those circumstances under which nonresidential commercial and industrial property undergoes a change in ownership, to ensure that all real property is assessed at fair market value when that real property undergoes a change in ownership regarding the bill's purpose. This bill would also require a person or entity that obtains a controlling or majority ownership interest in a legal entity, or an entity that makes specified transfers of ownership interests in the legal entity, to file a change in ownership statement, as specified, with the board within 60 days of specified transactions. If a person or entity is required by the bill to file a change in ownership statement and fails to timely do so, this bill would impose a penalty, payable to the board, that equals the greater of (1) 10% of the taxes owed in the current year on all of the real property owned by the legal entity in the state or (2) \$10,000. This bill would also impose a penalty, payable to the board, of the greater of (1)25% of the taxes owed in the current year on all of the real property owned by the legal entity in the state or (2) \$25,000 if a person or legal entity misrepresents the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a change in ownership on a change in ownership statement. This bill would specify that these provisions do not apply to property that is assessed by the State Board of Equalization, as provided. This bill would also make conforming changes to related provisions.

Existing law requires the Franchise Tax Board to include a question on the income tax returns of specified entities regarding changes in ownership of the entity's real property. Existing law requires the Franchise Tax Board to notify the State Board of Equalization if an entity answers 'yes' to this question.

This bill would additionally require the Franchise Tax Board to notify the State Board of Equalization if an entity does not respond to this question.

Existing law requires a taxpayer to file with local tax assessors a property statement that describes, among other things, specified personal property.

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This bill would require, on or before March 1, 2004, and each March 1 thereafter, a publicly traded company, as defined, to file a property statement with the State Board of Equalization that lists all of the real property owned or leased in the state by the company. If a company is required to file a property statement pursuant to the bill and fails to do so, or fails to file a complete statement by April 15, this bill would impose a penalty on the company, payable to the applicable county, equal to 10% of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the company in the state. This bill would specify that these provisions do not apply to property that is assessed by the State Board of Equalization, as provided.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

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SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the 1 following:

- (a) For ad valorem property taxation purposes, the California Constitution generally limits annual increases in the assessed taxable value of real property to 2 percent of the property's adjusted base year value, but requires that real property be reassessed at its full cash value when that real property undergoes a change in ownership.
- (b) These rules provide a necessary protection for real property owners when land values rise more rapidly than income.
- (c) Because of difficulties in identifying changes in ownership of certain nonresidential commercial and industrial properties, these properties often escape reassessment at full market value upon a change in ownership.
- (d) As a result of these assessment anomalies, despite rapid 16 economic growth during the 1990s which increased the value of nonresidential commercial and industrial properties, the share of real property taxes paid by nonresidential commercial and industrial property owners decreased, while the share of real property taxes paid by residential property owners (e.g. homeowners) increased.
- (e) Failure to capture the rising land values of nonresidential 22 commercial and industrial properties that have undergone a 23

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change in ownership has a range of negative consequences, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Hampering the ability of local governments to build new infrastructure and provide vital services.
- (2) Imposing a disproportionate property tax burden on newly constructed properties when compared to existing properties.
- (3) Encouraging local governments to foster sales tax-generating retail development rather than fostering job-creating investments such as manufacturing.
- (f) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to enact a program in enacting this act to specify those circumstances under which nonresidential commercial and industrial property undergoes a change in ownership, to ensure that all real property is assessed at fair market value when that real property undergoes a change in ownership.
- SEC. 2. Section 64 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:
- 64. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (i) of Section 61 and subdivisions (c) and (d) of this section, the purchase or transfer of ownership interests in legal entities, such as including, but not limited to, corporate stock or partnership or limited liability company interests, shall not be deemed to constitute a transfer of the real property of the legal entity. This subdivision is applicable applies to the purchase or transfer of ownership interests in a partnership without regard to whether it is a continuing or a dissolved partnership.
- (b) Any corporate reorganization, where all of the corporations involved are members of an affiliated group, and that qualifies as a reorganization under Section 368 of the United States Internal Revenue Code and that is accepted as a nontaxable event by similar California statutes, or any transfer of real property among members of an affiliated group, or any reorganization of farm credit institutions pursuant to the federal Farm Credit Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-181), as amended, shall not be a change of ownership. The taxpayer shall furnish proof, under penalty of perjury, to the assessor that the transfer meets the requirements of this subdivision.
- For purposes of this subdivision, "affiliated group" means one or more chains of corporations connected through stock ownership

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with a common parent corporation if both of the following conditions are met:

- (1) One hundred percent of the voting stock, exclusive of any share owned by directors, of each of the corporations, except the parent corporation, is owned by one or more of the other corporations.
- (2) The common parent corporation owns, directly, 100 percent of the voting stock, exclusive of any shares owned by directors, of at least one of the other corporations.
- (c) (1) When a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, other legal entity, or any other person obtains control through direct or indirect ownership or control of more than 50 percent of the voting stock of any corporation, or obtains a majority ownership interest in any partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity through the purchase or transfer of corporate stock, partnership, or limited liability company interest, or ownership interests in other legal entities, including any purchase or transfer of 50 percent or less of the ownership interest through which control or a majority ownership interest is obtained, the purchase or transfer of that stock or other interest shall be a change of ownership of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity in which the controlling interest is obtained.
- (2) On or after January 1, 1996, when an owner of a majority ownership interest in any partnership obtains all of the remaining ownership interests in that partnership or otherwise becomes the sole partner, the purchase or transfer of the minority interests, subject to the appropriate application of the step-transaction doctrine, shall not be a change in ownership of the real property owned by the partnership.
- (d) If property is transferred on or after March 1, 1975, to a legal entity in a transaction excluded from change in ownership by paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 62, then the persons holding ownership interests in that legal entity immediately after the transfer shall be considered the "original coowners." Whenever shares or other ownership interests representing cumulatively more than 50 percent of the total interests in the entity are transferred by any of the original coowners in one or more transactions, a change in ownership of that real property owned by the legal entity shall have occurred, and the property that

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was previously excluded from change in ownership under the provisions of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 62 shall be reappraised.

The date of reappraisal shall be the date of the transfer of the ownership interest representing individually or cumulatively more than 50 percent of the interests in the entity.

A transfer of shares or other ownership interests that results in a change in control of a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or any other legal entity is subject to reappraisal as provided in subdivision (c) rather than this subdivision.

(e) To assist in the determination of whether a change of ownership has occurred under subdivisions (c) and (d), the Franchise Tax Board shall include a question in substantially the following form on returns for partnerships, banks, and corporations (except tax-exempt organizations):

If the corporation (or partnership or limited liability company) owns real property in California, has cumulatively more than 50 percent of the voting stock (or more than 50 percent of total interest in both partnership or limited liability company capital and partnership or limited liability company profits) (1) been transferred by the corporation (or partnership or limited liability company) since March 1, 1975, or (2) been acquired by another legal entity or person during the year? (See instructions.)

If the entity answers "yes" to (1) or (2) in the above question *or does not respond*, then the Franchise Tax Board shall furnish the names and addresses of that entity and of the stock or partnership or limited liability company ownership interest transferees to the State Board of Equalization.

- SEC. 3. Section 471 is added to the Revenue and Taxation Code, to read:
- 471. (a) (1) On or before March 1, 2004, and on or before March 1 of each year thereafter, each publicly traded company shall file a real property statement with the State Board of Equalization at its office in Sacramento.
- (2) The first real property statement filed by a publicly traded company shall list, by county, the real property that the company

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owns or leases in the state and shall identify this real property by assessor parcel number.

- (3) Subsequent real property statements filed by a publicly traded company shall be limited to the listing of the real property transfers made by the company over the previous 12 months in each county and shall identify the assessor parcel number of the real property so transferred.
- (b) If a publicly traded company is required to file a real property statement pursuant to this section and fails to do so, or fails to file a complete statement by April 15, the company is liable for a penalty equal to 10 percent of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the company in the state. This penalty shall be added to the assessment roll in each applicable county and shall be collected like any other delinquent property taxes, and is subject to the same penalties for nonpayment.
- (c) This section does not apply to property that is assessed by the State Board of Equalization pursuant to Section 19 of Article XIII of the California Constitution.
- (d) As used in this section, 'publicly traded company' means a corporation or other legal entity that is subject to the filing requirements of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.
- SEC. 4. Section 480.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:
- 480.1. (a) Whenever there is a change in control of any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 64, a signed change in ownership statement as provided for in subdivision (b), shall be filed by the person or legal entity acquiring ownership control of such corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity with the board at its office in Sacramento. The statement shall list all counties in which the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity owns real property.
- (b) The change in ownership statement as required pursuant to subdivision (a), shall be declared to be true under penalty of perjury and shall give such information relative to the ownership control acquisition transaction as the board shall prescribe after consultation with the California Assessors' Association. The information shall include, but not be limited to, a description of the

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property, including the county in which it is located and the assessor's parcel number, owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, the parties to the transaction, and the date of the ownership control acquisition. The change in ownership statement shall not include any question which is not germane to the assessment function. The statement shall contain a notice that is printed, with the title at least 12-point boldface type and the body in at least 8-point boldface type, in the following form:

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"Important Notice"

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"The law requires any person or legal entity acquiring ownership control in any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity owning real property in California subject to local property taxation to complete and file a change in ownership statement with the State Board of Equalization at its office in Sacramento. The change in ownership statement must be filed within 45 60 days from the date of the change in control of a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity. The law further requires that a change in ownership statement be completed and filed whenever a written request is made therefor by the State Board of Equalization, regardless of whether a change in control of the legal entity has occurred. The failure to file a change in ownership statement within 45 days from the date of a written request by the State Board of Equalization do so results in a penalty of the greater of (1) 10 percent of the current year's taxes applicable to the new base year value reflecting the change in control on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity (or 10 percent of the current year's taxes on that property if no change in control occurred) in the state or (2) ten thousand dollars (\$10,000). In addition, a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity that misrepresents the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a change in ownership on a change in ownership statement results in a penalty of the greater of (1) 25 percent of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity in the state or (2) twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000). This penalty will be added to the

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assessment roll and shall be collected like any other delinquent property taxes, and be subject to the same penalties for nonpayment." shall be paid to the State Board of Equalization."

- (c) In the case of a corporation, the change in ownership statement shall be signed either by an officer of the corporation or an employee or agent who has been designated in writing by the board of directors to sign-such these statements on behalf of the corporation. In the case of a partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, the statement shall be signed by an officer, partner, manager, or an employee or agent who has been designated in writing by the partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity.
- (d) No person or entity acting for or on behalf of the parties to a transfer of real property shall incur liability for the consequences of assistance rendered to the transferee in preparation of any change in ownership statement, and no action may be brought or maintained against any-such person or entity as a result of such assistance.

Nothing in this this assistance. This section shall does not create a duty, either directly or by implication, that such assistance be rendered by any person or entity acting for or on behalf of parties to a transfer of real property.

- (e) The board or assessors may inspect any and all records and documents of a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity to *identify its real property and to* ascertain whether a change in control as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 64 has occurred. The corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity shall upon request, make such these records and documents available to the board during normal business hours.
- (f) This section does not apply to changes in ownership of property that is assessed by the State Board of Equalization pursuant to Section 19 of Article XIII of the California Constitution.
- SEC. 5. Section 480.2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:
- 480.2. (a) Whenever there is a change in ownership of any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 64, a signed change

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 in ownership statement as provided in subdivision (b) shall be filed by such the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity with the board at its office in Sacramento. The statement shall list all counties in which the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity owns real property.

(b) The change in ownership statement required pursuant to subdivision (a) shall be declared to be true and under penalty of perjury and shall give such information relative to the ownership interest acquisition transaction as the board shall prescribe after consultation with the California Assessors' Association. The information shall include, but not be limited to, a description of the property, including the county in which it is located and the assessor's parcel number, owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, the parties to the transaction, the date of the ownership interest acquisition, and a listing of the "original coowners" of the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity prior to the transaction. The change in ownership statement shall not include any question which is not germane to the assessment function. The statement shall contain a notice that is printed, with the title in at least 12-point boldface type and the body in at least 8-point boldface type, in the following form:

"Important Notice"

"The law requires any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity owning real property in California subject to local property taxation and transferring shares or other ownership interest in such legal entity which constitute a change in ownership pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 64 of the Revenue and Taxation Code to complete and file a change in ownership statement with the State Board of Equalization at its office in Sacramento. The change in ownership statement must be filed within-45 60 days from the date that shares or other ownership interests representing cumulatively more than 50 percent of the total control or ownership interests in the entity are transferred by any of the original coowners in one or more transactions. The law further requires that a change in ownership statement be completed and filed whenever a written request is made therefor by the State

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Board of Equalization, regardless of whether a change in ownership of the legal entity has occurred. The failure to file a change in ownership statement within 45 days from the date of a written request by the Board of Equalization do so results in a penalty of the greater of (1) 10 percent of the current year's taxes applicable to the new base year value reflecting the change in ownership on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity (or 10 percent of the current year's taxes on that real property if no change in ownership occurred) in the state or (2) ten thousand dollars (\$10,000). In addition, a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity that misrepresents the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a change in ownership on a change in ownership statement results in a penalty of the greater of (1) 25 percent of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity in the state or (2) twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000). This penalty will be added to the assessment roll and shall be collected like any other delinquent property taxes, and be subject to the same penalties for nonpayment." shall be paid to the State Board of Equalization."

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- (c) In the case of a corporation, the change in ownership statement shall be signed either by an officer of the corporation or an employee or agent who has been designated in writing by the board of directors to sign-such these statements on behalf of the corporation. In the case of a partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity, the statement shall be signed by an officer, partner, manager, or an employee or agent who has been designated in writing by the partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity.
- (d) No person or entity acting for or on behalf of the parties to a transfer of real property shall incur liability for the consequences of assistance rendered to the transferee in preparation of any change in ownership statement, and no action may be brought or maintained against any-such person or entity as a result of such assistance.

Nothing in this this assistance. This section shall does not create a duty, either directly or by implication, that such assistance be

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rendered by any person or entity acting for or on behalf of parties to a transfer of real property.

- (e) The board or assessors may inspect any and all records and documents of a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity to *identify its real property and to* ascertain whether a change in ownership as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 64 has occurred. The corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or legal entity shall upon request, make such these records and documents available to the board during normal business hours.
- (f) This section does not apply to changes in ownership of property that is assessed by the State Board of Equalization pursuant to Section 19 of Article XIII of the California Constitution.
- SEC. 6. Section 482 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:
- 482. (a) If a person or legal entity required to file a statement described in Section 480 fails to do so within 45 days from the date of a written request by the assessor, a penalty of either: (1) one hundred dollars (\$100), or (2) 10 percent of the taxes applicable to the new base year value reflecting the change in ownership of the real property or manufactured home, whichever is greater, but not to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) if the failure to file was not willful, shall, except as otherwise provided in this section, be added to the assessment made on the roll. The penalty shall apply for failure to file a complete change in ownership statement notwithstanding the fact that the assessor determines that no change in ownership has occurred as defined in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 60) of Part 0.5. The penalty may also be applied if after a request the transferee files an incomplete statement and does not supply the missing information upon a second request.
- (b) (1) If a person or legal entity required to file a statement described in Section 480.1 or 480.2 fails to do so within 45 60 days from the date of a written request by the State Board of Equalization, a penalty of 10 percent of the taxes applicable to the new base year value reflecting the change in control or change in ownership of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, or legal entity, or 10 percent of the current year's taxes on that property if no change in control or change in ownership

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occurred, shall be added to the assessment made on the roll. The penalty shall apply for failure to file a complete statement notwithstanding the fact that the board determines that no change in control or change in ownership has occurred as defined in subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 64. The penalty may also be applied if after a request the person or legal entity files an incomplete statement and does not supply the missing information upon a second request. That penalty shall be in lieu of the penalty provisions of subdivision (a). However, the penalty added by this subdivision shall be automatically extinguished if the person or legal entity files a complete statement described in Section 480.1 or 480.2 no later than 60 days after the date on which the person or legal entity is notified of the penalty. change in ownership, as defined in subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 64, the person or legal entity shall pay a penalty to the State Board of Equalization equal to the greater of the following:

- (A) Ten percent of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity in the state.
 - (B) Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

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- (2) If a person or legal entity is required to file a statement described in Section 480.1 or 480.2 and misrepresents the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a change in ownership on a change in ownership statement, the person or legal entity shall pay a penalty to the State Board of Equalization equal to the greater of the following:
- (A) Twenty-five percent of the current year's taxes on all of the real property owned by the corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other legal entity in the state.
 - (B) Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000).
- (c) The penalty for failure to file a timely statement pursuant to Sections Section 480, 480.1, and 480.2 for any one transfer may be imposed only one time, even though the assessor may initiate a request as often as he or she deems necessary.
- (d) The Except as provided in subdivision (b), the penalty shall be added to the roll in the same manner as a special assessment and treated, collected, and subject to the same penalties for the delinquency as all other taxes on the roll in which it is entered.
- (1) When the transfer to be reported under this section is of a portion of a property or parcel appearing on the roll during the

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fiscal year in which the 45-day period expires, the current year's taxes shall be prorated so the penalty will be computed on the proportion of property which has transferred.

- (2) Any penalty added to the roll pursuant to this section between January 1 and June 30 may be entered either on the unsecured roll or the roll being prepared. After January 1, the penalty may be added to the current roll only with the approval of the tax collector.
- (3) If the property is transferred or conveyed to a bona fide purchaser for value or becomes subject to a lien of a bona fide encumbrancer for value after the transfer of ownership resulting in the imposition of the penalty and before the enrollment of the penalty, the penalty shall be entered on the unsecured roll in the name of the transferee whose failure to file the change in ownership statement resulted in the imposition of the penalty.
- (e) When a penalty imposed pursuant to this section is entered on the unsecured roll, the tax collector may immediately file a certificate authorized by Section 2191.3.
- (f) Notice of any penalty added to either the secured or unsecured roll pursuant to this section shall be mailed by the assessor to the transferee at his or her address contained in any recorded instrument or document evidencing a transfer of an interest in real property or manufactured home or at any address reasonably known to the assessor.